

The Shrubberies School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115823
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	379149
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Jon Carter

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	93
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	11
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	William Jackson
Headteacher	Jane Jones
Date of previous school inspection	24–25 June 2009
School address	Oldends Lane Stonehouse Gloucestershire GL10 2DG
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed teaching and learning in 13 lessons taught by 11 teachers and held meetings with school leaders and managers, representatives from the governing body and a group of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at assessment information, the school's analysis of pupils' progress, curriculum plans, minutes of meetings of the governing body, records of the school leaders' lesson monitoring and documents regarding safeguarding of pupils. They analysed responses from the 65 questionnaires received from parents and carers, as well as those from 34 pupils and 63 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effectively school leaders ensure that assessment information is used by teachers to plan lessons that enable pupils to build on their knowledge and understanding.
- How well pupils' knowledge of the diversity of culture and religion in the United Kingdom is developed through the school's work to strengthen community cohesion.
- How effectively the governing body monitor the school's performance and provide challenge to school leaders and managers to improve the school's overall effectiveness.

Information about the school

The Shrubberies is a special school of smaller than average size which has specialist status for cognition and learning. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs because of their severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders. Most of the pupils are boys. The largest ethnic group in the school is made up of pupils from White British backgrounds. The school has a much lower than average percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. A lower than average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. Those who are at a very early stage of learning English are at an early stage of learning any language because of their special educational needs. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The Early Years Foundation Stage is made up of two classes. Children in the Nursery are taught separately and children in Reception share a class with others from Years 1 and 2.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The Shrubberies is a good school. Pupils make good progress in their learning and show good development in their personal skills. They feel exceptionally safe because of the excellent level of care, guidance and support they receive from staff. The school engages parents and carers in their children's education and development extremely well. They are particularly pleased about how well staff look after pupils' well-being so that they enjoy coming to school. One parent, whose views echoed those of many, wrote, 'My son loves attending school. He tells me he wants to go every day and gets upset at weekends when he can't!'

Learning is well structured and provides good opportunities for pupils to develop a range of basic skills that prepare them well for their future. Consequently, pupils make good progress from low starting points, particularly in important life skills and social communication. Teaching is good overall. Staff are knowledgeable about the needs of individual pupils and take account of these well when planning lesson activities. Overall, pupils' attendance is above average and their involvement in the school and wider community is outstanding.

Monitoring and evaluation of lessons by leaders and managers are regular and well organised. Accurate information is routinely gathered about the quality of teaching through formal and informal observation. This is used effectively to identify strengths and weaknesses and contributes to good self-evaluation processes. Monitoring systems, however, place too much emphasis on evaluating the skills demonstrated by teachers, rather than the progress made by pupils in their learning and development. This is also reflected in some teachers' planning, which does not always focus clearly and sharply on what individual pupils will learn or develop further. Some teachers make very good use of targets to provide well-focused opportunities to assess pupils' progress and provide them with feedback, but this is not yet consistent across the school.

Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers at all levels have ensured that the good quality of teaching has been maintained. The school's most effective practitioners are increasingly being provided with training to develop their skills in preparation for taking on roles in middle leadership. The clear identification of areas for development, the success of actions already taken to address relative weakness and the improving rigour with which the governing body challenges senior leaders indicates that the school has a good capacity to improve.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of learning, so that the achievement of all groups of pupils improves to be consistently good or better, by ensuring that:
 - teachers clearly and consistently identify the next step in learning for individual pupils
 - pupils consistently receive high quality feedback that evaluates the progress they have made in their learning.

- Improve the rigour with which leaders and managers at all levels monitor the effectiveness of teaching, by ensuring that observations of lessons focus clearly and sharply on the learning and progress made by pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

In lessons, pupils of both genders make good progress. They particularly enjoy activities which take them into the community while learning. For example, a group from Years 10 and 11 developed their numeracy skills and understanding of money through estimating the value of the shopping they needed to buy and comparing their guesses with the receipt from the shop. Pupils' basic skills develop with increasing pace through both the teaching of discrete skills and the use of those skills in other situations. There is a strong emphasis on enterprise, for example, where pupils make items and price them ready for sale at events such as the advent fair or contribute to running the café. They use information and communication technology (ICT) routinely to support their communication and develop their literacy skills. The success with which pupils engage with these activities and learn from them supports good development of skills which contribute to their future economic well-being. Pupils' behaviour is good in classrooms and around the school. However, where learning activities are exceptionally well matched to pupils' needs and interests, behaviour in lessons is exemplary.

Pupils make a particularly strong contribution to their school community. Their enthusiastic participation in activities such as the school council and fundraising for good causes helps them to develop good social and moral skills while playing their part in creating a safe and friendly learning environment. Links with other local schools, such as a dance project with a nearby independent school, help to ensure the school has a positive profile and enable pupils to have an active and fulfilling role in the wider community. Their understanding of a variety of religious and ethnic traditions found in different parts of the United Kingdom has improved as a result of a greater range of opportunities being provided to learn about festivals and customs in lessons and assemblies. Pupils' good adoption of healthy lifestyles is demonstrated by their enthusiastic participation in physical activity and good understanding of what healthy eating means and why it is important. While pupils' attendance is above average overall, it is particularly high for those in the secondary department.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The school has exceptionally strong links with parents and carers and professionals, which ensure that staff have an excellent understanding of the needs of each individual pupil. Consequently, the high quality care, guidance and support provided by staff are very well focused on pupils' specific needs. Warm relationships ensure that, even during times when they find it difficult to cope, pupils know they can rely on staff to look after them very well and help them overcome the difficulties that they experience. Outstanding arrangements for transition into and through the school, as well as on to further education at the end of Key Stage 4, ensure that new classes or placements meet pupils' needs and that all necessary information is transferred. As a result, pupils receive smooth and continuous education provision. As a complementary service to the school's specialist status, the school has an Outreach team which supports staff working with pupils who have cognitive delay in mainstream schools. Links which have been established through this work have helped to support the school's own development of better assessment practice.

Pupils access a curriculum which is relevant to their individual needs. Good use is made of sensory resources to stimulate and engage pupils. In the most effective planning for primary-aged pupils, good links are made between different areas of learning and themed learning matches pupils' interests well. However, cross-curricular work is not as comprehensively planned in other parts of the school. New

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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facilities for older pupils particularly help to ensure that important life skills such as cooking and using ICT are developed well through purposeful activities that are appropriate to their stage of development. Where possible, pupils are enabled to participate in work experience and achieve qualifications for their learning in key skills. There is a good range of clubs at lunchtime and after school which are well attended by pupils. There is an extensive programme which brings visitors into school and ensures that all pupils have the opportunity to participate in a residential visit.

Teaching is good and improving with the comprehensive programme of professional development for staff to continuously update their subject knowledge and understanding of different teaching methods. Relationships between adults and pupils are positive, warm and caring. Staff ensure that learning environments are bright and exciting. Good use is made of ICT to engage and motivate pupils. Lessons are planned well so that pupils’ learning is structured and takes account of the range of abilities, although it is not always clear how much progress pupils are expected to make. Assessment of what pupils know and can do is usually thorough and accurate. In the better lessons, this detailed information is used well to ensure that planning provides pupils with short-term goals that help them work towards achieving their longer-term targets. Consequently, pupils are motivated to learn because the work they do is suitably challenging and they receive useful feedback about the progress they have made. Teaching assistants are deployed very effectively as key members of the teaching team to ensure that the pace of learning is good.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and her leadership team communicate a consistent message about the way forward for the school. As a result, there is a shared ethos and all staff have a common understanding of the contribution they make to continued school improvement. The strongly embedded culture of team working ensures that the quality of teaching and pupils’ progress has remained good despite the disruption caused by the building of new accommodation for the secondary classes.

The governing body provide good support and challenge to the leadership team and visit the school regularly to gain an appreciation of its strengths and weaknesses. Their contribution to school improvement is increasingly effective through activities, such as benchmarking the school’s performance against that of similar

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establishments, to ensure the school has sufficiently high expectations of how well pupils might achieve.

Arrangements for ensuring that pupils are adequately safeguarded are good. Staff are trained regularly and risk assessment procedures are robust. The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion is good. School leaders have an accurate understanding of pupils’ backgrounds. They increasingly ensure that pupils have suitable opportunities to enhance their understanding of the diversity of different heritages across the United Kingdom. However, school leaders recognise that purposeful links with children from more diverse backgrounds are less well developed and appropriate plans are in place to redress this balance.

Highly effective links with parents and carers, including the work done by the parent support advisor, ensure that they are exceptionally well informed about how their children are developing. Support and advice is tailored to the needs of individuals. In the words of one parent, ‘The communication between school and home is excellent.’

The promotion of equality of opportunity is good in all aspects of the school’s work, and it takes suitable steps to tackle discrimination. The progress of all groups of pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable is monitored, even where the size of the group is very small. Consequently, no group of pupils performs significantly differently to their peers. Pupils have friendly and positive attitudes towards others and the school operates harmoniously on a day-to-day basis.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. As the school serves a wide catchment, the flexible arrangements in the Nursery accommodate parents and carers well so that they can arrive at convenient times and stay to settle their children. This ensures that there is a calm, positive and nurturing start to the day. Leaders and managers ensure that very strong connections are maintained with parents and carers.

Staff have a good understanding of the level of development of individual children. They use this knowledge effectively to make detailed plans for activities which are well matched to children’s specific needs. For example, in Nursery, children made good progress in their spoken language development through role play while pretending to get ready for bed.

Following recent building work, the school has remodelled the outdoor learning areas to give improved opportunities for children to develop independence and the ability to play imaginatively. Consequently, while there is ample provision for physical development in the forest school and play areas, other areas of learning are less well established.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Sixth form

Students in the school’s post-16 provision often come from other schools. They settle quickly in their new environment because staff are skilled at providing care and support which meets their increasingly complex needs well. Leaders and managers regularly review the quality of provision made for students.

Teaching is good overall. Where students are engaged well with their activities, they make good progress. For example, in an art lesson, the topic of colour was well supported by stimulating visual images which encouraged good attention to the task. Occasionally, however, opportunities are missed to make best use of resources and staff to ensure that the needs of all students are met effectively.

These are the grades for the sixth form

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers that returned questionnaires was well above average. Parents and carers expressed overwhelmingly positive views about the school. They were particularly clear that the school kept their children safe and met their special educational needs. A very small minority expressed the view that their child was not making enough progress. Inspectors found that pupils usually made good progress, although in some areas of the school there were occasions where opportunities were missed to ensure pupils made as much progress as possible.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Shrubberies School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 65 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 93 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	48	74	17	26	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	54	83	10	15	0	0	1	2
The school informs me about my child’s progress	50	77	14	22	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	46	71	16	25	3	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	47	72	17	26	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	46	71	18	28	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	62	25	38	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	44	68	19	29	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	52	80	12	18	0	0	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	41	63	23	35	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	47	72	17	26	0	0	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	49	75	15	23	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	57	88	7	11	1	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



30 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Shrubberies School, Stonehouse GL10 2DG

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly when we visited your school recently. We were very pleased that so many of you wanted to talk to us about your school. You told us that you enjoy coming to school and feel very safe because staff look after you very well. Your behaviour was always good during our visit and sometimes it was excellent – well done!

I am writing to tell you that The Shrubberies is a good school. You make good progress in your learning and develop good personal skills. The teachers who lead your school make sure that your lessons help you to get better at the things you find most difficult. They also work really well with your parents and carers so that they know how well you are getting on.

There are lots of exciting activities for you to do in lessons which help to give you skills that you will need as you grow older. Often teachers make sure that these are connected to things you are especially interested in or take you out of school into the local community. You showed us that you particularly enjoy those lessons.

In the best lessons, your teachers make sure you know exactly what they want you to learn. We have asked the headteacher to make sure that this happens in all your lessons by making sure teachers plan those targets clearly and share them with you.

You can all help by talking to your teachers about how you have improved during your lessons.

Yours sincerely
Jon Carter
Lead inspector

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